

**SUMMARY OF THE
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 1, 1999**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Monday, March 1, 1999, at 12:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. Steven Baker of the Arizona Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss assessor checklists, training courses, and the committee's response to comments received from the Virginia NELAC workgroup.*

INTRODUCTION

The teleconference was called to order with a brief discussion of membership issues. Mr. Baker explained that, although the committee will not formally address the issue of new members until after its March 23 teleconference, prospective member Ms. Marlene Moore was participating in the day's meeting because she has a good idea of what NELAC wants from the On-site Assessment Committee. Ms. Moore, President of Advanced Systems, Inc., introduced herself to the participants and explained that she has been involved with NELAC since its inception. She currently serves on the Program Policy and Structure Committee, but her term will expire at the next annual meeting.

Mr. Baker then raised the issue of Mr. Stan Morton's membership on the committee. Mr. Morton has been unable to attend committee meetings. Since his term on the committee does not expire until 2002, it was decided that, in accordance with NELAC policy, the best course for the committee would be to seek a member with greater availability. Per the NELAC policy on attendance at meetings, Mr. Baker will draft a letter to Mr. Morton informing him of the situation.

ASSESSOR CHECKLISTS

The committee then turned its attention to the Volatile Organic Compounds-Gas Chromatography (VOC-GC) and Organic Compounds-High Pressure Liquid Chromatography (OC-HPLC) checklists prepared by Mr. Baker. There was considerable discussion of editorial and formatting issues. It was noted that the NELAC Standards are redundant and are not necessarily written in the order in which one would want to audit. For this reason, checklists need not follow the same order as the Standard. Key points decided by the committee were:

- Each checklist will include a revision date referring to the date on which the committee reached agreement on the checklist.
- References to NELAC Standards will include a date.
- Each checklist will include a place to document which laboratory Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is being audited. It was noted that the SOP must meet NELAC requirements, but need not be a mandated test method.

- Not all of Chapter 5 of the NELAC Standards will be addressed by specific assessor checklists. Only those portions of NELAC Standard Chapter 5 (Quality Systems) that ask questions about the method will be addressed by specific checklists. Those portions of Chapter 5 that ask yes/no questions about the site will be included on a general checklist. Such a general checklist is being developed by Mr. Charles Dyer.

With minor revisions in response to committee comments, the VOC-GC and OC-HPLC checklists should be ready for posting on the NELAC Website. Mr. Baker suggested that he would forward the completed checklists to Ms. Carolyn Cross of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for posting and to the members of the committee for use as a template in developing other checklists. This suggestion met with approval from the committee.

Ms. Barbara Finazzo was asked to provide an EPA list of the methods that the agency has determined to be Performance Based Measurement System (PBMS)-compatible and those that they have determined must be method-specific. Such a list would help the committee deal with method-specific checklists. Ms. Finazzo agreed to provide as much information as she could.

The status of other assessor checklists being developed by the committee was reviewed. Ms. Rosanna Buhl has forwarded her GC extractables checklist to Mr. Baker and Mr. Jack Hall for their preliminary editorial comments, and will distribute the checklist to the rest of the committee. It should be ready for posting on the NELAC Website soon. The microbiology checklist being developed by Mr. Wayne Davis should be completed by March 5, 1999. The titration checklist being developed by Ms. Kelly Wilson should be completed by March 10, 1999 and the general checklist being developed by Mr. Charles Dyer should be completed by March 12, 1999. Ms. Finazzo confirmed that she will assist the committee by developing the metals checklist and is looking for an individual with radiochemistry (RadChem) expertise. Since she had not yet been successful in locating an individual with such experience, Ms. Moore offered to contact someone from the Department of Defense (DOD) with RadChem expertise. Mr. Baker ended the discussion on assessor checklists by pointing out that the committee will have to work cooperatively in distributing checklists and returning comments in a timely manner.

TRAINING COURSES

The NELAC Basic Assessor Training Course is being developed by an EPA contractor from the training manual prepared by the On-site Assessment Committee. This is being done in order to provide a quick response to the pressing need for a basic course. It was suggested that EPA submit the final curriculum to the On-site Assessment Committee for its approval and that the committee would then decide whether the course needs Registrar Accreditation Board (RAB) accreditation. Considerable discussion about RAB certification ensued. The committee reviewed information concerning the costs associated with American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-RAB course accreditation provided to them by Ms. Shanya Salamaca, Senior Coordinator of the RAB Course Accreditation Program. Ms. Finazzo emphasized that the Board of Directors is concerned with both the time constraints and the cost associated with RAB certification. The question of who will decide whether the basic

course needs RAB certification, therefore, may be moot. She reminded the committee that Ms. Betsy Dutrow, NELAC Executive Secretary, is investigating alternatives to RAB certification. Ms. Finazzo will contact Ms. Dutrow to find out whether she has identified other options that can serve the same function, and will relay this information to the committee.

Ms. Finazzo clarified the training subcommittee issue addressed in the Board's February 8, 1999, letter to the On-site Assessment Committee. She explained that the letter communicated a recommendation to the committee to bring in additional resources if needed for development of technical training courses rather than a mandate to form an independent subcommittee. The Board recognizes that smaller groups might be able to finalize technical training course outlines more quickly. Ms. Marlene Moore, being new to committee discussion of training course development, asked for an explanation of the committee's strategy for moving forward on technical training. Members of the committee noted that the major revisions of the assessor checklists had sidetracked the committee from the training issue. They projected that assessor checklists would be complete and posted on the NELAC Website by the end of March 1999, and that April 1999 would be dedicated to training course development. Prototype training course outlines should be posted on the NELAC Website by the end of April 1999. It was suggested that committee members share the outlines that have already been conceptualized so that all members may be thinking about the courses and making comments. It was also noted that the basic course had been relatively easy to develop because the committee had the benefit of the NELAC Standards from which to draw appropriate language. The technical training courses will be more challenging. The committee's technical training course strategy is to start with good outlines and then to flesh them out based on the input of NELAC stakeholders. Mr. Baker noted that there had been no word from Ms. Jeanne Mourrain, NELAC Director, regarding the availability of EPA's satellite training network. Ms. Finazzo volunteered to follow up on this item with Ms. Mourrain and relay the information to the committee.

Some discussion of the time constraints associated with technical training ensued. It was noted that ELAB has recommended that NELAC delay approval of accrediting authorities until NELAC V and that the clock for training deadlines start at that time. While the basic training course should be available by the end of 1999, for the technical training courses, fall or winter of 2000 is probably realistic timing. These dates will fall well within the four-year deadline for training availability. The committee anticipated that its main focus after NELAC V would be technical training courses.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Discussion turned to rumors that EPA funding to NELAC would be eliminated. Ms. Finazzo reassured the committee that this is not true for the immediate future, but noted that NELAC does not yet have its final operating budget for the year.

Several participants had questions about the comments from the Virginia NELAC Workgroup. Ms. Moore noted that she has a large electronic file of all of the comments from the Virginia NELAC Workgroup and offered to forward the comments specific to Chapter 3 of the

Standards to the committee. In this way committee members will be better prepared to discuss the comments at the next teleconference.

CONCLUSION

Ms. Finazzo informed the committee that although she would be unable to attend their scheduled March 23 teleconference, she would relay information to Mr. Baker to share with the committee. The committee then briefly discussed scheduling an early April teleconference and decided that the first full week in April (week of April 5, 1999) would be appropriate. Mr. Baker stated that he would coordinate the teleconference arrangements with Ms. Cross and communicate the specific dial-in details to the committee.

**ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 18, 1999**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Mr. Steve Baker will draft a letter to Mr. Stan Morton informing him of committee's concerns with his repeated absences from committee meetings.	March 23, 1999
2.	Ms. Barbara Finazzo will provide the committee with list of methods that EPA has determined PBMS-compatible versus those that must be method-specific.	March 23, 1999
3.	Ms. Marlene Moore will attempt to locate someone with RadChem experience to assist in development of assessor checklists.	March 23, 1999
4.	Mr. Baker will incorporate committee revisions into VOC-GC and OC-HPLC assessor checklists and forward to Ms. Carolyn Cross for posting on the NELAC Website.	Immediately
5.	Ms. Finazzo will contact Ms. Betsy Dutrow regarding alternatives to RAB certification for NELAC Basic Assessor Training Course and relay this information to On-Site Assessment Committee.	March 23, 1999
6.	Ms. Finazzo will contact Ms. Jeanne Mourrain regarding the availability of EPA's satellite training network for NELAC training courses and relay this information to On-Site Assessment Committee.	March 23, 1999
7.	Ms. Moore will forward Virginia NELAC Workgroup comments to committee members.	Immediately
8.	Mr. Baker will coordinate teleconference lines for early April 1999.	Immediately

**PARTICIPANTS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE
MARCH 1, 1999**

Name	Affiliation	Phone/Fax/E-mail
Baker, Steven Chair	AZ Dept of Health Svcs, Lab Lic. & Cert.	T: 602-255-3454 F: 602-255-3462 E: sbaker@hs.state.az.us
Buhl, Rosanna	Battelle Ocean Sciences	T: 781-952-5309 F: 781-934-2124 E: buhl@battelle.org
Davis, R. Wayne	SC Dept. of Health and Env Cntl	T: 803-935-7025 F: 803-935-6859 E: davisrw@columb36.dhec.state.sc.us
Dyer, Charles	NH Dept of Environmental Services	T: 603-271-2991 F: 603-271-2867 E: c_dyer@des.state.nh.us
Hall, Jack	Quanterra, Inc.	T: 423-588-6401 F: 423-584-4315 E: hallj@quanterra.com
Moore, Marlene	Advanced Systems, Inc.	T: 302-834-9796 F: 302-995-1086 E: mmoore@advancedsys.com
Morton, J. Stan (absent)	U.S. Dept of Energy - Idaho Operations Office	T: 208-526-2186 F: 208-526-5964 E: mortonjs@lnel.gov
Patillo, Marlene	MD Dept of the Environment	T: 410-631-3646 F: 410-631-3733 E: mpatillo@mde.state.md.us
Steinke, Athene	EA Laboratories	T: 410-771-4920 F: 410-771-4407 E: asteinke@eaest.com
Toth, William	Worldwide Solutions for Tomorrow	T: 301-668-0499 F: 301-924-4594 E: btoth@erols.com
Wilson, Kelly	CT&E Environmental Services, Inc.	T: 616-843-1877 F: 616-845-9942 E: kwilson@cteesi.com
Finazzo, Barbara Ombudsman	U.S. EPA Region 2	T: 732-321-6754 F: 732-321-4381 E: finazzo.barbara@epamail.epa.gov
Greene, Lisa (Contractor Support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: 919-541-7483 F: 919-541-7386 E: lcg@rti.org